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Official Records

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Tuesday, 21 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Hurricane in the Dominican Republic and Haiti

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like, on behalf of all the members of the General Assembly, to extend our deepest sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of Haiti and of the Dominican Republic for the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage that have resulted from the recent hurricane in those countries. We also express our deepest sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of all those countries affected by the recent hurricanes.

I urge the international community to show its solidarity and hope that it will respond promptly and generously to any request for help from those countries.

I now invite Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, to take the floor.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

President Alexandre (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Haitian people, I thank the President of the General Assembly for the special attention being given to Haiti.

On behalf of the Haitian people, who have once again been struck by a terrible tragedy, I wish to express my most heartfelt thanks for the sympathy expressed by our friends in the international community. This disaster has taken many Haitian lives, especially in the southern part of the country, and has caused considerable physical damage to an environment that, unfortunately, is already in poor condition.

I am very appreciative of the rapid and effective response provided by the international community during the flooding that affected the country last spring. In the face of this tragedy, which is of the magnitude of a humanitarian disaster, I appeal urgently for the solidarity of the international community, so that it may once again support the efforts of the Government in the provision of emergency assistance to those who have suffered.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Interim President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, President of our Republic, I wish to express thanks for the kindness that has been shown to my country in connection with the terrible disaster that has just struck the Dominican Republic as well as our neighbour, the Republic of Haiti.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Day after day, we are saddened to hear painful news of the serious floods that have taken many lives, left hundreds injured and tens of thousands homeless, and caused significant damage to the agriculture and infrastructure of a number of provinces of our country. In the face of this situation, my Government has taken urgent steps to bring relief to the most seriously affected areas.

This challenge, combined with others, is considerable, and, in order to meet it, we will need the international community's cooperation — convinced as we are that, as in other similar situations, we will be able to rely on its help.

Lastly, we wish to convey our gratitude for the expressions of solidarity already received from many Governments, which have shared our sorrow in these difficult times.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2004, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization, under agenda item 10 of the agenda.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: It is good to see so many countries represented here at such a high level. I know this reflects your understanding that, in these difficult times, the United Nations is — as was stated four years ago in the Millennium Declaration — "the indispensable common house of the entire human family".

Indeed, today more than ever, the world needs an effective mechanism through which to seek common solutions to common problems. That is what this Organization was created for. Let us not imagine that, if we fail to make good use of it, we will find any more effective instrument.

This time next year, the Assembly will be meeting to review progress in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. By then, I hope that members will be ready to take bold decisions together on the full range of issues covered in the Declaration, helped by the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which will be available before the end of this year.

As I said a year ago, we have reached a fork in the road. If you, the political leaders of the world, cannot reach agreement on the way forward, history will take the decisions for you, and the interests of your peoples may go by default.

Today I will not seek to pre-judge those decisions, but to remind you of the all-important framework in which they should be taken — namely, the rule of law, in each country and in the world.

The vision of a government of laws and not of men is almost as old as civilization itself. In a hallway not far from this rostrum is a replica of the code of laws promulgated by Hammurabi more than 3,000 years ago, in the land we now call Iraq.

Much of Hammurabi's code now seems impossibly harsh. But etched into its tablets are principles of justice that have been recognized, if seldom fully implemented, by almost every human society since his time: legal protection for the poor; restraints on the strong, so that they cannot oppress the weak; laws publicly enacted, and known to all.

That code was a landmark in mankind's struggle to build an order where, instead of might making right, right would make might. Many nations represented in this Hall can proudly point to founding documents of their own that embody that simple concept. And this Organization — your United Nations — is founded on the same simple principle.

Yet today the rule of law is at risk around the world. Again and again, we see laws shamelessly disregarded — those that ordain respect for innocent life, for civilians, for the vulnerable — especially children.

To mention only a few flagrant and topical examples, in Iraq, we see civilians massacred in cold blood, while relief workers, journalists and other non-combatants are taken hostage and put to death in the most barbarous fashion. At the same time, we have seen Iraqi prisoners disgracefully abused. In Darfur, we

see whole populations displaced, and their homes destroyed, while rape is used as a deliberate strategy. In northern Uganda, we have seen children mutilated, and forced to take part in acts of unspeakable cruelty. In Beslan, we have seen children taken hostage and brutally massacred. In Israel, we see civilians, including children, deliberately targeted by Palestinian suicide bombers. And in Palestine, we see homes destroyed, lands seized and needless civilian casualties caused by Israel's excessive use of force. And all over the world we see people being prepared for further such acts, through hate propaganda directed against Jews, against Muslims and against anyone who can be identified as different from one's own group.

No cause, no grievance, however legitimate in itself, can begin to justify such acts. They put all of us to shame. Their prevalence reflects our collective failure to uphold the rule of law and to instil respect for it in our fellow men and women. We all have a duty to do whatever we can to restore that respect.

To do so, we must start from the principle that no one is above the law and no one should be denied its protection. Every nation that proclaims the rule of law at home must respect it abroad; and every nation that insists on it abroad must enforce it at home.

Yes, the rule of law starts at home. But in too many places it remains elusive. Hatred, corruption, violence and exclusion go without redress. The vulnerable lack effective recourse, and the powerful manipulate laws to retain power and accumulate wealth. At times, even the necessary fight against terrorism is allowed to encroach unnecessarily on civil liberties.

At the international level, all States — strong and weak, big and small — need a framework of fair rules, which each can be confident that others will obey. Fortunately, such a framework exists. From trade to terrorism, from the law of the sea to weapons of mass destruction, States have created an impressive body of norms and laws. This is one of our Organization's proudest achievements.

Yet this framework is riddled with gaps and weaknesses. Too often it is applied selectively, and enforced arbitrarily. It lacks the teeth that turn a body of laws into an effective legal system. Where enforcement capacity does exist, as in the Security Council, many feel it is not always used fairly or effectively. Where the rule of law is most earnestly invoked, as in the Commission on Human Rights, those invoking it do not always practise what they preach.

Those who seek to bestow legitimacy must themselves embody it; and those who invoke international law must themselves submit to it. Just as, within a country, respect for the law depends on the sense that all have a say in making and implementing it, so it is in our global community. No nation must feel excluded. All must feel that international law belongs to them and protects their legitimate interests.

Rule of law as a mere concept is not enough. Laws must be put into practice and permeate the fabric of our lives. It is by strengthening and implementing disarmament treaties, including their verification provisions, that we can best defend ourselves against the proliferation — and potential use — of weapons of mass destruction. It is by applying the law that we can deny financial resources and safe haven to terrorists — an essential element in any strategy for defeating terrorism.

It is by reintroducing the rule of law, and confidence in its impartial application, that we can hope to resuscitate societies shattered by conflict. It is the law, including Security Council resolutions, which offers the best foundation for resolving prolonged conflicts — in the Middle East, in Iraq and around the world.

It is by rigorously upholding international law that we can, and must, fulfil our responsibility to protect innocent civilians from genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. As I warned the Assembly five years ago, history will judge us very harshly if we let ourselves be deflected from this task or think we are excused from it by invocations of national sovereignty.

The Security Council has just requested me to appoint an independent commission to investigate reports of human rights violations in Darfur and determine whether acts of genocide have been committed. I shall do so with all speed. But let no one treat this as a respite, during which events in that devastated region continue to take their course. Regardless of their legal definition, things are happening there which must shock the conscience of every human being.

The African Union has nobly taken the lead and the responsibility in providing monitors and a

protective force in Darfur — as well as in seeking a political settlement, which alone can bring lasting peace and security to that society. But we all know the present limitations of this newborn Union. We must give it every possible support. Let no one imagine that this affair concerns Africans alone. The victims are human beings, whose human rights must be sacred to us all. We all have a duty to do whatever we can to rescue them, and to do it now.

Last month, I promised the Security Council that I would make the Organization's work to strengthen the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies a priority for the remainder of my tenure. By the same token, I urge you to do more to foster the rule of law at home and abroad. I ask all of you here today to take advantage of the arrangements we have made for you to sign treaties on the protection of civilians — treaties that you yourselves negotiated — and then to go back home and implement them fully and in good faith. And I implore you to give your full support to the measures I shall bring before you during this session to improve the security of United Nations staff. Those non-combatants, who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way to assist their fellow men and women, surely deserve your protection as well as your respect.

Throughout the world, the victims of violence and injustice are waiting; they are waiting for us to keep our word. They notice when we use words to mask inaction. They notice when laws that should protect them are not applied.

I believe we can restore and extend the rule of law throughout the world. But ultimately, that will depend on the hold that the law has on our consciences. This Organization was founded in the ashes of a war that brought untold sorrow to mankind. Today we must look again into our collective conscience and ask ourselves whether we are doing enough.

Each generation has its part to play in the age-old struggle to strengthen the rule of law for all — which alone can guarantee freedom for all. Let our generation not be found wanting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation.

Agenda item 9

General debate

The President (*spoke in French*): Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I should like to remind members that the list of speakers was created on the basis that statements will have a time limit of up to 15 minutes per statement. In the light of that given time frame, I should like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly.

I should also like to draw the General Assembly's attention to the decision taken by the Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged.

In that connection, I should like to suggest that speakers in the general debate, after delivering their statements, should leave the General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the fifty-ninth session?

It was so decided.

Address by Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Da Silva (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Through Foreign Minister Jean Ping of Gabon, I greet the representatives of all peoples gathered here today. I fraternally salute Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who

has been guiding the work of the United Nations with wisdom and devotion.

For the second time, I address this universal Assembly on behalf of Brazil. I have a lifelong commitment to those silenced by inequality, hunger and hopelessness. In the powerful words of Franz Fanon, the colonial past bestowed on them a common legacy: "If you so desire, take it: the freedom to starve to death".

Today, we are 191 nation-States. In the past, 125 of us were subjected to the oppression of a few Powers that originally occupied less than 2 per cent of the globe. The end of colonialism confirmed, in the political arena the right of peoples to self-determination. The Assembly is the highest expression of an international order based on the independence of nations.

However, such a political transformation has not taken place in the economic and social fields, and history shows that that will not happen spontaneously. In 1820, the per capita income of the richest nation in the world was five times greater than that of the poorest one. Today, that disparity has reached a ratio of 80-to-1.

The former subjects have become perpetual debtors in the international economic system. Protectionist barriers and other obstacles to balanced trade — aggravated by the concentration of investments, knowledge and technology — have followed colonial domination. A powerful, all-encompassing and invisible wheel runs the system from afar. It often revokes democratic decisions, causes the sovereignty of States to shrivel and imposes itself on elected Governments. It demands that legitimate national development projects be renounced. The perverse logic of draining the needy to irrigate the affluent still stands. In recent decades, an ill-inclusive and asymmetric globalization has deepened the devastating legacy of poverty and social regression, which is now bursting into the agenda of the twenty-first century. Today, in 54 countries, per capita income is lower than what it was 10 years ago; in 34 countries, life expectancy has decreased; and in 14 countries, a greater number of children are starving to death.

In Africa, where colonialism resisted until the twilight of the twentieth century, 200 million people are caught in an existence marked by hunger, disease and neglect, to which the world has become oblivious, numbed by the routine of the distant suffering of others. Lack of basic sanitation has killed more children in the past decade than all military conflicts since the end of the Second World War.

Love cannot spring from cruelty. Peace will never rise from poverty and hunger. The hatred and senselessness that are spreading throughout the world feed on despair and on the absolute lack of hope for many people.

This year alone, more than 1,700 people have died as a consequence of terrorist attacks around the world — in Madrid, Baghdad and Jakarta. Those tragedies must be added to so many others in India, the Middle East and the United States, as well as to, more recently, the barbaric slaughter of children in Beslan. Mankind is losing the fight for peace. Only the enlightened values of humanism, applied with clarity of mind and determination, will be able to counter barbarism.

This situation imposes a new sense of collective and individual responsibility on the peoples and the leaders of the world. If peace is our goal, it is our task to build it. If we wish to eliminate violence, we must address its deep-rooted origins with the same resolve employed against the agents of hatred. The path to lasting peace must encompass a new international political and economic order, one that extends real opportunities for economic and social development to all countries. It therefore requires reform of the global development model, as well as international institutions that are effectively democratic and based on multilateralism and on an acknowledgement of the rights and aspirations of all peoples.

The tortured look in the eyes of the outcast should do more to stir our conscience than the no less dramatic statistics on social inequality. Their gaze calls to us for a future of hope. Just as our destinies are now intertwined, every conflict has global effects. When the sky is shown to us from between iron bars, let us not mistake the cage for freedom.

We have the scientific knowledge and the scale of production necessary for resolving global economic and social challenges. Today, nature and progress can be reconciled by means of development models that are ethically and environmentally sustainable. Nature is not a museum of untouchable relics, but neither should it be further degraded by human and environmental exploitation in a search for wealth at any price.

A generation is remembered not only for what it accomplishes, but also for what it fails to accomplish. If our resources are so much greater than our achievements, how will we explain to future generations why we did so little when so much was within our reach? A neglectful civilization is condemned to wither like a body without a soul.

The exhortations from the great New Deal leader Franklin Delano Roosevelt still resonate with inescapable pertinence. What is needed today is "bold, persistent experimentation". "The only thing we need to fear is fear itself." Such boldness stems not from instinct, but rather from political courage; not from irresponsible wilfulness, but rather from a daring ability to reform. What sets civilization apart from barbarism is a political architecture that promotes peaceful change and advances social and economic life by means of democratic consensus. If we fail against hunger and poverty, what else will be able to bring us together?

I believe the time has come to state clearly that for us to once again grow in a fair way, an important shift in the financial flows from international multilateral organizations is necessary. Such organizations were created to provide solutions, but, by adopting excessive rigour, they themselves have sometimes become part of the problem. They must adjust their focus on development, thus restoring their original objectives. The International Monetary Fund should be able to provide the guarantees and the liquidity that are necessary for productive investments — especially in infrastructure, housing and sanitation — and which can also restore poor countries' capacity to pay.

Brazilian foreign policy, in all its dimensions, is focused on joining other nations in efforts aimed at the establishment of a world of justice and peace. Yesterday, in a historic meeting, more than 60 world leaders gathered to give new impetus to international action against hunger and poverty. I firmly believe that the process launched yesterday will bring the fight against world poverty to a new level. As we advance in this new alliance, we shall have better means to attain the Millennium Development Goals, especially with regard to the eradication of hunger.

It was in this same spirit of contributing to the reduction of poverty that Brazil, India and South Africa established, last year, the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Fund. Our first project, in Guinea-Bissau, will be launched tomorrow.

HIV/AIDS and its nefarious connection to hunger and poverty is also a priority. Our international cooperation programme with other developing countries in fighting HIV/AIDS is now operating in six developing countries and will soon be extended to another three.

I am fully aware of the serious security problems that pose a threat to international stability. There seems to be no prospect for improvement in the critical situation in the Middle East. In that and other conflicts, the international community cannot allow violence — whether sponsored by States or by other actors — to prevail over democratic dialogue. The Palestinian people are still far from achieving the self-determination to which they are entitled.

We know that the underlying causes of insecurity are complex. The necessary fight against terrorism cannot be conceived strictly in military terms. We must develop strategies that encompass both solidarity and firmness, but with strict respect for international law. On that basis, Brazil and other Latin American countries have responded to the call of the United Nations and are engaged in the stabilization efforts in Haiti. If we seek new paradigms in international relations, we cannot shirk our responsibility to address the concrete situations that emerge.

The promotion of equitable development is crucial to addressing the centuries-old causes of Haitian instability. In our region, despite grave social and economic problems, a culture of peace prevails. Our continent is experiencing a period of democratic coming of age, with a vibrant civil society. We have learned that development and social justice must be sought with determination and an openness to dialogue. The bouts of instability in our region have been dealt with while strictly respecting our institutions. Whenever requested, and within its means and capabilities, Brazil has made its contribution to help friendly countries overcome crises that threatened their constitutional order and stability. We do not believe in interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries, but neither can we condone omission and indifference in the face of situations that affect our neighbours.

Brazil is committed to the establishment of a South America that is politically stable, prosperous and united, on the basis of strengthening the South

American Common Market (MERCOSUR) and its strategic relationship with Argentina. The possibility that a community of South American States could emerge is no longer a distant dream, thanks to decisive initiatives in the areas of structural, economic, commercial, social and cultural integration.

Brazil is at work in multilateral negotiations with a view to reaching just and equitable agreements. At the last meeting of the World Trade Organization, we took a fundamental step towards the elimination of abusive restrictions that hamper developing countries. Coordination among countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America in the Group of 20 was decisive for keeping the Doha Round on the right track of trade liberalization with social justice. If successful, the Doha Round could lift more than 500 million people out of poverty. It is essential to carry on building a new world economic and commercial geography that, while maintaining the vital ties to developed countries, allows for the establishment of solid bridges among the countries of the South, which have remained isolated from one another for too long.

Brazil is committed to the success of the international climate change regime. We are developing renewable sources of energy. That is why we shall continue to actively strive for the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.

South America contains approximately 50 per cent of the world's biodiversity. We stand for combating bio-piracy as well as for the negotiation of an international regime for sharing the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge.

I reiterate what I stated at this very rostrum last year: only an international order based on multilateralism can promote peace and the sustainable development of nations. Such an order must be based on a constructive dialogue among different cultures and world visions. No organ is better suited than the United Nations to ensure the world's convergence around common goals. The Security Council is the only source of legitimate action in the field of international peace and security, but its composition must reflect today's reality — not perpetuate the post-World-War-II era or the Cold War era. Reform proposals that simply dress the current structure in new clothes and do not provide for an increase in the number of permanent members are manifestly insufficient. The difficulties inherent to any reform process must not cause us to lose sight of its urgency.

There will be neither security nor stability in the world until a more just and democratic order is established. The community of nations must give a clear and urgent response to this challenge. We can find such a response in the wise words of the Prophet Isaiah: the fruit of righteousness will be peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bush: Thank you for the honour of addressing the General Assembly. The American people respect the idealism that gave life to this Organization. And we respect the men and women of the United Nations, who stand for peace and human rights in every part of the world. Welcome to New York City, and welcome to the United States of America.

During the past three years, I have addressed the General Assembly in a time of tragedy for my country, and in times of decision for all of us. Now we gather at a time of tremendous opportunity for the United Nations and for all peaceful nations. For decades, the circle of liberty, security and development has been expanding in our world. This progress has brought unity to Europe, self-government to Latin America and Asia and new hope to Africa. Now we have the historic

chance to widen the circle even further, to fight radicalism and terror with justice and dignity and to achieve a true peace, founded on human freedom.

The United Nations and my country share the deepest commitments. Both the American Declaration of Independence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaim the equal value and dignity of every human life. That dignity is honoured by the rule of law, limits on the power of the State, respect for women, protection of private property, free speech, equal justice and religious tolerance. That dignity is dishonoured by oppression, corruption, tyranny, bigotry, terrorism and all violence against the innocent. Both our founding documents affirm that this bright line between justice and injustice — between right and wrong — is the same in every age, every culture and every nation.

Wise Governments also stand for these principles for very practical and realistic reasons. We know that dictators are quick to choose aggression, while free nations strive to resolve differences in peace. We know that oppressive Governments support terror, while free Governments fight the terrorists in their midst. We know that free peoples embrace progress and life, instead of becoming the recruits for murderous ideologies.

Every nation that wants peace will share the benefits of a freer world. And every nation that seeks peace has an obligation to help build that world. Eventually there is no safe isolation from terror networks, or failed States that shelter them, or outlaw regimes or weapons of mass destruction. Eventually there is no safety in looking away, seeking the quiet life by ignoring the struggles and oppression of others.

In this young century our world needs a new definition of security. Our security is not merely found in spheres of influence or some balance of power. The security of our world is found in the advancing rights of mankind.

Those rights are advancing across the world. And across the world, the enemies of human rights are responding with violence. Terrorists and their allies believe the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United States Bill of Rights and every charter of liberty ever written are lies to be burned and destroyed and forgotten. They believe that dictators should control every mind and tongue in the Middle East and beyond. They believe that suicide and torture and murder are fully justified to serve any goal they declare. And they act on their beliefs.

In the last year alone terrorists have attacked police stations and banks and commuter trains and synagogues and a school filled with children. This month in Beslan we saw once again how the terrorists measure their success in the death of the innocent and in the pain of grieving families. Svetlana Dzebisov was held hostage along with her son and her nephew. Her nephew did not survive. She recently visited the cemetery and saw what she called the "little graves". She said, "I understand that there is evil in the world, but what have these little creatures done?"

The Russian children did nothing to deserve such awful suffering and fright and death. The people of Madrid and Jerusalem and Istanbul and Baghdad have done nothing to deserve sudden and random murder. Those acts violate the standards of justice in all cultures and the principles of all religions. All civilized nations are in this struggle together and all must fight the murderers.

We are determined to destroy terror networks wherever they operate, and the United States is grateful to every nation that is helping to seize terrorist assets, track down their operatives and disrupt their plans. We are determined to end the State sponsorship of terror, and my nation is grateful to all that participated in the liberation of Afghanistan. We are determined to prevent proliferation and to enforce the demands of the world, and my nation is grateful to the soldiers of many nations who have helped to deliver the Iraqi people from an outlaw dictator.

The dictator agreed in 1991, as a condition of a ceasefire, to fully comply with all Security Council resolutions, then ignored more than a decade of those resolutions. Finally, the Security Council promised serious consequences for his defiance. The commitments we make must have meaning. When we say "serious consequences", for the sake of peace there must be serious consequences. So a coalition of nations enforced the just demands of the world.

Defending our ideals is vital, but it is not enough. Our broader mission as United Nations Members is to apply those ideals to the great issues of our time. Our wider goal is to promote hope and progress as the alternatives to hatred and violence. Our great purpose is to build a better world beyond the war on terror.

Because we believe in human dignity, the United States and many other nations have established a Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In three years the contributing countries have funded projects in more than 90 countries, and pledged a total of $5.6 billion to those efforts. America has undertaken a $15 billion effort to provide prevention and treatment and humane care in nations afflicted by AIDS, placing a special focus on 15 countries where the need is most urgent. AIDS is the greatest health crisis of our time, and our unprecedented commitment will bring new hope to those who have walked too long in the shadow of death.

Because we believe in human dignity, the United States and many other nations have joined together to confront the evil of trafficking in human beings. We are supporting organizations that rescue the victims, passing stronger anti-trafficking laws and warning travellers that they will be held to account for supporting this modern form of slavery. Women and children should never be exploited for pleasure or greed, anywhere on Earth.

Because we believe in human dignity, we should take seriously the protection of life from exploitation under any pretext. In this session, the General Assembly will consider a draft resolution sponsored by Costa Rica calling for a comprehensive ban on human cloning. I support that draft resolution and urge all Governments to affirm a basic ethical principle: no human life should ever be produced or destroyed for the benefit of another.

Because we believe in human dignity, the United States and many other nations have changed the way we fight poverty, curb corruption and provide aid. In 2002 we created the Monterrey Consensus, a bold approach that links new aid from developed nations to real reform in developing ones. And through the Millennium Challenge Account, my nation is increasing our aid to developing nations that expand economic freedom and invest in the education and health of their own people.

Because we believe in human dignity, the United States and many other nations have acted to lift the crushing burden of debt that limits the growth of developing economies and holds millions of people in poverty. Since those efforts began in 1996, poor countries with the heaviest debt burdens have received more than $30 billion of relief. And to prevent the build-up of future debt, my country and other nations have agreed that international financial institutions should increasingly provide new aid in the form of grants rather than loans.

Because we believe in human dignity, the world must have more effective means to stabilize regions in turmoil and to halt religious violence and ethnic cleansing. We must create permanent capabilities to respond to future crises.

The United States and Italy have proposed a Global Peace Operations Initiative. Group of Eight (G-8) countries will train 75,000 peacekeepers — initially from Africa — so they can conduct operations on that continent and elsewhere. The countries of the G-8 will help that peacekeeping force with deployment and logistical needs.

At this hour, the world is witnessing terrible suffering and horrible crimes in the Darfur region of the Sudan, crimes my Government has concluded are genocide. The United States played a key role in efforts to broker a ceasefire, and we are providing humanitarian assistance to the Sudanese people. Rwanda and Nigeria have deployed forces in the Sudan to help improve security so that aid can be delivered. The Security Council adopted a new resolution that supports an expanded African Union force to help prevent further bloodshed and that urges the Government of the Sudan to stop flights by military aircraft in Darfur. We congratulate the members of the Council on this timely and necessary action. I call on the Government of the Sudan to honour the ceasefire it signed, and to stop the killing in Darfur.

Because we believe in human dignity, peaceful nations must stand for the advance of democracy. No other system of government has done more to protect minorities, to secure the rights of labour, to raise the status of women or to channel human energy to the pursuits of peace. We have witnessed the rise of democratic Governments in predominantly Hindu and Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish and Christian cultures. Democratic institutions have taken root in modern societies and in traditional societies. When it comes to the desire for liberty and justice, there is no clash of civilizations. People everywhere are capable of freedom and worthy of freedom.

Finding the full promise of representative Government takes time, as America has found in two centuries of debate and struggle. Nor is there only one

form of representative Government, because democracies by definition take on the unique character of the peoples that create them. Yet this much we know with certainty: the desire for freedom resides in every human heart, and that desire cannot be contained forever by prison walls or martial laws or secret police. Over time and across the Earth, freedom will find a way.

Freedom is finding a way in Iraq and Afghanistan, and we must continue to show our commitment to democracies in those nations. The liberty that many have won at a cost must be secured. As Members of the United Nations, we all have a stake in the success of the world's newest democracies. Not long ago, outlaw regimes in Baghdad and Kabul threatened the peace and sponsored terrorists. Those regimes destabilized one of the world's most vital and most volatile regions. They brutalized their peoples in defiance of all civilized norms.

Today, the Iraqi and Afghan peoples are on the path to democracy and freedom. The Governments that are rising will pose no threat to others. Instead of harbouring terrorists, they are fighting terrorist groups. And this progress is good for the long-term security of all of us. The Afghan people are showing extraordinary courage under difficult conditions. They are fighting to defend their nation from Taliban hold-outs and helping to strike against the terrorist killers. They are reviving their economy. They have adopted a Constitution that protects the rights of all, while honouring their nation's most cherished traditions. More than 10 million Afghan citizens — over four million of them women — are now registered to vote in next month's presidential election. To any who still would question whether Muslim societies can be democratic societies, the Afghan people are giving their answer.

Since the last general debate of this General Assembly, the people of Iraq have regained sovereignty. Today, in this Hall, the Prime Minister of Iraq and his delegation represent a country that has rejoined the community of nations. The Government of Prime Minister Allawi has earned the support of every nation that believes in self-determination and desires peace. And under Security Council resolutions 1511 (2003) and 1546 (2004), the world is providing that support. The United Nations and its Member nations must respond to Prime Minister Allawi's request and do more to help build an Iraq that is secure, democratic, federal and free.

A democratic Iraq has ruthless enemies because terrorists know the stakes in that country. They know that a free Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will be a decisive blow against their ambitions for that region. So a terrorist group associated with Al Qaeda is now one of the main groups killing the innocent in Iraq today, conducting a campaign of bombings against civilians and the beheadings of bound men. Coalition forces now serving in Iraq are confronting the terrorists and foreign fighters so that peaceful nations around the world will never have to face them within our own borders.

Our coalition is standing beside a growing Iraqi security force. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is providing vital training to that force. More than 35 nations have contributed money and expertise to help rebuild Iraq's infrastructure and, as the Iraqi Interim Government moves towards national elections, officials from the United Nations are helping Iraqis build the infrastructure of democracy. Those selfless people are doing heroic work and are carrying on the great legacy of Sergio Vieira de Mello.

As we have seen in other countries, one of the main terrorist goals is to undermine, disrupt and influence election outcomes. We can expect terrorist attacks to escalate as Afghanistan and Iraq approach national elections. The work ahead is demanding, but those difficulties will not shake our conviction that the future of Afghanistan and Iraq is a future of liberty. The proper response to difficulty is not to retreat — it is to prevail.

The advance of freedom always carries a cost, paid by the bravest among us. America mourns the losses to our nation and to many others, and today I assure every friend of Afghanistan and Iraq, and every enemy of liberty: We will stand with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq until their hopes of freedom and security are fulfilled.

These two nations will be a model for the broader Middle East, a region where millions have been denied basic human rights and simple justice. For too long, many nations, including my own, tolerated and even excused oppression in the Middle East in the name of stability. Oppression became common, but stability never arrived. We must take a different approach. We must help the reformers of the Middle East as they work for freedom and strive to build a community of peaceful, democratic nations.

That commitment to democratic reform is essential to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. Peace will not be achieved by Palestinian rulers who intimidate opposition, tolerate corruption and maintain ties to terrorist groups. The long-suffering Palestinian people deserve better. They deserve true leaders capable of creating and governing a free and peaceful Palestinian State.

Even after the setbacks and frustrations of recent months, good will and hard effort can achieve the promise of the road map to peace. Those who would lead a new Palestinian State should adopt peaceful means to achieve the rights of their people and create the reformed institutions of a stable democracy. Arab States should end incitement in their own media, cut off public and private funding for terrorism, and establish normal relations with Israel. Israel should impose a settlement freeze, dismantle unauthorized outposts, end the daily humiliation of the Palestinian people, and avoid any actions that prejudice final negotiations. And world leaders should withdraw all favour and support from any Palestinian ruler who fails his people and betrays their cause.

The democratic hopes we see growing in the Middle East are growing everywhere. In the words of the Burmese democracy advocate Aung San Suu Kyi:

> "We do not accept the notion that democracy is a Western value. To the contrary, democracy simply means good Government rooted in responsibility, transparency and accountability."

Here at the United Nations, Members know this to be true. In recent years, this Organization has helped create a new democracy in East Timor and the United Nations has aided other nations in making the transition to self-rule.

Because I believe that the advance of liberty is the path to both a safer and better world, today I propose establishing a democracy fund within the United Nations. This is a great calling for this great Organization. The fund would help countries lay the foundations of democracy by instituting the rule of law, independent courts, a free press, political parties and trade unions. Money from the fund would also help set up voter precincts and polling places and support the work of election monitors. To show our commitment to the new democracy fund, the United States will make an initial contribution, and I urge all other nations to contribute as well.

Today I have outlined a broad agenda to advance human dignity and enhance the security of all of us. The defeat of terror, the protection of human rights, the spread of prosperity, the advance of democracy — these causes, these ideals, call us to great work in the world. Each of us alone can only do so much. Together we can accomplish so much more.

History will honour the high ideals of this Organization. The Charter states them with clarity: "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights ... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

Let history also record that our generation of leaders followed through on these ideals, even in adversity. Let history show that in a decisive decade, members of the United Nations did not grow weary in our duties, or waver in meeting them. I am confident that this young century will be liberty's century. I believe we will rise to this moment, because I know the character of so many nations and leaders represented here today. And I have faith in the transforming power of freedom.

May God bless you.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, currently chaired by my country, Qatar. I would like to seize this opportunity to extend congratulations to Mr. Jean Ping on his assumption of the presidency of the current session of the General Assembly, wishing His Excellency every success in the discharge of his functions. I would also like to extend thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for guiding the work of the previous session.

It also gives me pleasure to express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his judicious conduct of the work of this Organization during a critical period in which international relations have faced and are still facing immense challenges.

The United Nations was established six decades ago as an expression of the aspirations of all the members of the international community to save the world from the scourge of war, to maintain international peace and security, and to achieve cooperation among nations and people in various fields. Roughly two decades after its inception, on 15 June 1964, to be exact, the Group of 77 was established to express the aspirations of scores of developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to work with each other under the umbrella of the United Nations, with a view to promoting their common economic interests, developing their negotiating capacity regarding various international economic issues and increasing the bonds of their technical cooperation.

Just as the United Nations has grown, its membership has increased and the scope of its activity has expanded, so, too, the Group of 77 and China has attracted new members into its membership — which now stands at 132 States, constituting more than two thirds of the membership of the United Nations.

Our Group embodies the commitment of the developing countries to the mission of the United Nations and their determination to be guided by the lofty principles enshrined in its Charter. While the ministerial meetings of the Group highlight with utmost certainty its close relationship with the international organizations, the actions of its States since April 2000, when it convened its first meeting at the level of presidents and heads of Government, reaffirm the interest of its members in promoting coordination among themselves, inspired by the principles of the United Nations to achieve their aims.

In the view of the Group of 77 and China, the difficult challenge facing the international community today is that of maintaining international peace and security while achieving economic welfare and development. The history of international relations over the second half of the last century has shown that it is almost impossible to maintain peace and security as long as people lack the minimum requirements for a basic dignified livelihood. Poverty and destitution have often resulted in tensions that have led to breaches of international peace and security, and it is no coincidence that the poorest regions in the world are the ones that have suffered the most complicated regional conflicts.

To achieve the aims of security and development simultaneously, the international community needs to adopt more equitable policies that do justice to a large segment of the members of the international community who still lack many of the basic necessities of life.

It is indisputable that globalization has acquired an immense momentum and yielded positive results. Nevertheless, it has been accompanied by some adverse effects as well, and a review and reconsideration of a number of current international economic policies is needed before globalization can acquire the human face it is supposed to have.

The continued imbalance in the distribution of the benefits of international economic interdependence, the progressive widening of the gap between the developed and the developing countries, and the deterioration of the economic conditions in quite a few countries of the South, with the attendant adverse effects on the environment, will accentuate feelings of discontent and frustration and could even lead to abhorrent forms of international conflict.

Accordingly, it is necessary to eliminate the obstacles that make it difficult for developing countries to reap the fruits of world economic growth, and the international community must reaffirm its commitment to the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through a deeper and more comprehensive integration of the developing countries in the world economy.

The Group of 77 and China urgently calls for the establishment of an open multilateral trading system, one which takes into account the norms of justice and the rule of law and is geared to assisting developing countries combat poverty and underdevelopment. Such a system requires the elimination of bias in the liberalization of trade between the developed and the developing countries and the discontinuation of practices that continue to impede freedom of commerce, such as recourse to agricultural subsidies, support for certain products and restrictions on the movement of individuals, which make it impossible for developing countries to tap their potential or market many of their products.

In this regard we call on the developed countries to liberalize trade at a faster rate by removing the various obstacles that have so far deprived the developing countries of their right to enjoy international trade relations based on equal opportunity. While noting the progress achieved in the Doha negotiations on the question of agriculture, we support the access to the world market of other products from developing countries and urge that this issue should be accorded the priority it deserves. Moreover, there should be agreement on specific measures to ensure sufficient financial flows to developing countries, especially foreign direct investment, to assist those countries in building the production capacity they need to compete in the world market. We would also stress the importance of enabling everyone to benefit from the achievements of science and technology and thereby to gain access to sources of knowledge and receive help in achieving development.

A review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration indicates that its objectives relating to the countries of Africa and the least developed countries have so far seemed unattainable. This is due in large measure to the failure of countries to fulfil the commitments they so generously made at various United Nations conferences and summits. As the General Assembly is going to undertake the first review of the Millennium Declaration next year, we should seize the opportunity of our meeting today to renew our commitment to the prompt implementation of the Declaration. At the 2005 review of the Declaration, the Group of 77 and China will present a series of implementing proposals, most of which focus on the development of multilateral international relations, with particular emphasis on the situation in Africa, the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. We have participated actively in seeking practical solutions to the problems besetting those regions and will participate in the forthcoming review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States early in 2005. I take this opportunity to urge the international community to support the Barbados Programme of Action, as it is an integral part of our efforts to move towards a better world.

Allow me now to address, on behalf of my country, Qatar, a number of political issues closely related to our aim of enabling the developing countries and peoples to enjoy their full economic rights. In particular, I wish to single out the absence of democracy and the prolonged slackening of political reform evident in a number of countries of the South, and probably most apparent in the past few years in the Middle East, where they have been at the root of most of the harsh social and economic suffering currently plaguing that region.

Political reform and people's participation in decision-making are no longer an option but have become a definite necessity. As the history of economic relations has shown, the States that have made the greatest economic achievements — whether in the North or in the South — have been those which were most committed to the exercise of democracy. The few exceptions — States that have managed to improve their economic performance without following the principles of democracy — have known limited success and have continued to be vulnerable to sudden economic upheavals.

Just as international economic relations are dominated by the discourse on sustainable development, another discourse must be launched on what I would term "sustainable reform". There is no lesson to be learned from the experience of the countries of the South which undertake political reform one moment then regress the next or take one step towards democracy to serve a selfish interest then take two steps backwards once that interest has been satisfied. One must instead look for guidance to the long history of development, which shows that those States which succeed are those which realize that their economies must be based on efficiency and that efficiency can be achieved, not by fiat and policies of

intimidation and confinement, but only by discussion of and participation in public affairs.

The question of Palestine embodies the suffering of a people deprived of both its political and its economic rights and struggling, despite its difficulties, to remedy the situation. However, the Israeli occupation remains a crushing burden on the legitimate Palestinian dreams of freedom and development. For more than 50 years, the question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the General Assembly. Hence, the international community needs to listen to its conscience and to reconsider its position, bearing in mind that this question despite its humanitarian nature and manifest legitimacy, has been allowed to fester from one century to the next, thus compounding the tragedy of the Palestinian people before the might of the Israeli occupation forces. Compelling Israel to implement the resolutions of international legitimacy is more than a mere duty, because such legitimacy must not be applied selectively. Also, Israel must fulfil the commitments it has made, in accordance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued on 9 July 2004 and later endorsed by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session. This includes its commitment to the road map; halting the construction of the separation wall, which has harmed the Palestinian homeland and disrupted livelihoods; and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self determination and to establish an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, that would coexist in security and peace with Israel.

Related to this is the need to achieve a comprehensive peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Israel's withdrawal from all the territories occupied in 1967, including the Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Shaba'a farms. In this regard, we stress the need to transform the Middle East into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, without any exception.

As regards Iraq, it is our hope that Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) will help stabilize the situation so as to allow the implementation of the resolution's timetable regarding the holding of free, democratic elections and the timely drafting of a permanent constitution as a prelude to the establishment of an elected constitutional government. Also, we will spare no effort in supporting the reconstruction of Iraq, and we affirm our position of principle regarding the need to safeguard its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs. We would also like to emphasize the central role of the United Nations in Iraq.

We note with satisfaction the commitment of the Sudan to work closely with the international community to resolve the conflict in the Darfur region. This makes it incumbent on the international community to cooperate positively with the Sudanese Government, especially since it has initiated actions to restore the rule of law to mitigate the suffering of the inhabitants of that region. We also welcome the accords that were signed to find a peaceful settlement to the problem of southern Sudan and urge the international community to support the efforts of the Government of the Sudan in this regard.

These last issues which I have raised, although seemingly of a political nature related to chronic regional problems, mainly in the Middle East, are not, in fact, far removed from the endeavours of the Group of 77 and China to achieve a more equitable international order. The regional stability that is sought in each of these cases will allow economic reconstruction on a sound basis in every instance.

The Group of 77 has been striving for more than 40 years on more than one front. While building bridges among developing counties, it has actively sought to reach out to the developed countries and convince them that the interest of the international economic order lies in narrowing the gap, rather than widening it. Moreover, it will always remain committed to the principles of the United Nations, mindful of the need for continuous coordination with its organs and bodies.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Emir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Gabon.

El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bongo Ondimba (*spoke in French*): At the outset I would like to express to Member States my deepest gratitude — that of the Government and people of Gabon — for the great honour and the confidence shown in Gabon and in Africa through the election of one of its sons to the lofty post of President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We have long been familiar, Mr. President, with your diplomatic skills and your personal dedication to the cause of the United Nations system, and we have full confidence that you will successfully discharge your duties.

I wish to reiterate to your predecessor my sincere congratulations on the work he accomplished during his mandate.

To the Secretary-General, I wish to reaffirm my confidence and the support of my country in the pursuit of your action heading the United Nations.

Four years ago, we unanimously adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). With renewed energy and will, we have undertaken to achieve a number of its goals by the year 2015: in particular, to reduce poverty and hunger, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and to establish a global partnership for development.

Achieving these goals will clearly require a strong political impetus on our part. That is why I hail the initiative of convening a United Nations summit dedicated, inter alia, to the implementation of the Millennium Goals, and scheduled for 2005 in New York. The major disparities which come to light daily between the rich and the poor countries evoke serious concern. We cannot reconcile ourselves to the despair which would result from failure. The African States, for their part, reject such an inevitability; they are becoming involved in the prevention and resolution of the conflicts undermining their continent, are settling into good governance and are making efforts to implement the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

At the same time, the international community, the Group of Eight countries and the specialized institutions of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, have a moral obligation to translate into concrete action their commitments to support Africa's development. That development naturally hinges on the maintenance of international peace and security throughout the African continent.

Our determination in that respect is unequivocal. Such is the case in Côte d'Ivoire, where the peace process was relaunched at the Accra summit in July 2004. The same holds true for the decision of the African Union to play an active role in the resolution of the crises in Darfur, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The support provided by the United Nations in those countries and the role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, must be commended.

Moreover, we welcome the prospects for a more effective contribution by the United Nations in the process of the reconstruction of Iraq and support for the political transition under way there. It is indeed vital for regional stability and for peace that Iraq once again become a normally functioning State with stable institutions.

In the lengthy conflict between the State of Israel ad the Palestinian people, the restoration of lasting peace will be possible only at the negotiating table. It also depends on the reactivation of the road map.

In this case, as in many others, such as the war on international terrorism, United Nations action must be more effective. The decisions of the Security Council will then be decisive in the settlement of such conflicts.

Given the numerous crisis situations throughout the world, the role of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security has continued to grow. Its field of action, in terms of its decisions, has gradually expanded, and the human, material and financial resources required for their implementation have increased.

To cope with these situations, a significant number of States must participate in its action. That requires an expansion ~f the membership of the Security Council, in both categories — permanent and non-permanent.

Need I recall that in 1977, from this very rostrum, I drew the Organization's attention to the need to provide a seat for Africa in the Security Council. It is indeed paradoxical that Africa is still not counted among the permanent members, even though the bulk of the Council's decisions directly involve Africa. We therefore must adapt the Security Council to the changing realities of our world. Its reform must be given high priority at this session.

Beyond that, our efforts at reform must have as their ultimate objective the strengthening of the action of the entire United Nations system in the areas identified during the Millennium Summit in 2000.

Striving to achieve these shared goals, Africa is increasingly shouldering its share of responsibility. Shared and intensive solidarity on the part of countries with greater resources is more than ever required. What is at stake today is the survival of millions of individuals throughout the world.

Poverty — one of the root causes of political, economic and social instability, which are sources of armed conflict — must be eradicated.

Therefore, we must implement, here and now, the commitment we have undertaken to change the course of our shared history. Let us together nurture the hope of a better destiny — the hope that we can think and act in a different manner, in order to provide present and future generations with genuine reasons for hope.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Gabonese Republic for the statement he has just made.

El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (spoke in French): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Deiss (*spoke in French*): Two years ago I had the great satisfaction of personally witnessing, in this very Hall, Switzerland's entry into the United Nations. I will never forget the whole-hearted welcome that Switzerland received on that occasion.

Switzerland's accession to the United Nations took place at a time when the fight against terrorism dominated international debate and divergences in opinion on how to proceed with respect to Iraq were widening. Dissension arose once again within the Security Council. That experience showed that any action taken in the absence of a mandate that is clearly defined in a Security Council resolution is doomed to failure. Such actions can only result in differences of opinion that reduce the effectiveness of the international community's efforts and jeopardize international security.

When all is said and done, however, the Iraq crisis has made clear that the international community remains committed to a multilateral system for maintaining international peace and security, but that the structures currently in place are no longer appropriate.

There is now, therefore, a clear need for reform and for strengthening the means of joint action. The High-Level Panel appointed by the Secretary-General to make recommendations for ensuring effective joint action is a first step on the road to reform. Switzerland actively supports that initiative.

Thus, this past spring, we invited a group of experts to discuss the subject of the right of self-defence, and in that context, the role of the Security Council. Their conclusion was that it is neither necessary nor desirable to extend or reinterpret the right of individual self-defence set out in the Charter. What we must do is strengthen joint action; that is the issue on which we must focus.

In this context, prevention is essential. On the one hand, we must ensure improved living conditions throughout the world; on the other, multilateral institutions must respond more rapidly to nascent crises.

A more rapid response does not necessarily mean military intervention. Switzerland has always held the view that force must remain an instrument of last resort. Apart from situations of self-defence, force may be used only with the approval of the Security Council and when other methods of persuasion or pressure have been exhausted.

A more rapid response also means that the Security Council must fully exercise its primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, which is conferred upon it by the Charter. This raises the issue of the legitimacy of action of the Security Council and, in particular, the question of its composition. After more than 10 years of deliberation on that issue, it is time we found a solution. The composition of the Security Council must better reflect the changes that have taken place in the international context since its creation, and developing countries must have a greater role to play. Greater account must be taken of the financial and material contributions of specific Member States.

On the other hand, Switzerland is opposed to the creation of new seats with the right of veto, because the right of veto in its current form is undemocratic and hampers the capacity of the Security Council to act. In the interests of greater legitimacy, those countries that are not members of the Security Council should have more opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. In particular, it is important to strengthen mechanisms for consultation with countries directly involved in situations of tension.

Reforming institutions may be an arduous and unrewarding task, but it is indispensable for increasing the efficiency of the United Nations and for promoting peace. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the work that he has already done and encourage him to continue along the same path.

Over and above institutional aspects, the commitment of Member States is critical if the United Nations is to be effective. First of all, if it is to remain credible, the United Nations and its Member States must be the unassailable guarantors of international law and, in particular, international humanitarian law. I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for having emphasized today the absolute primacy of the rule of law — a source a strength for the weak. Switzerland will continue to insist that respect for the rule of law is the only practical way forward. In the absence of a political solution to the conflict in Darfur, for example, civilians have become the victims of attacks that constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law — a violation which must be punished by the appropriate national and, if necessary, international, bodies.

For that reason, too, following the adoption of resolution ES-10/15 on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice — which found that the construction of the separation barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory by Israel is contrary to international law — Switzerland accepts, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva Conventions, the mandate to conduct consultations on ways and means for the parties concerned to achieve greater respect for international humanitarian law.

If it is to be strong, the United Nations must be able to rely on those States with the necessary resources to help it carry out its tasks. All of those countries, including my own, are called upon to provide the personnel and materials needed by peacekeeping missions. The appalling attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad underscores the need to give special consideration to the security of the United Nations and its staff. Fortunately, additional security measures are now in place. Other measures must follow. It is our shared duty to ensure that the Secretary-General has the necessary financial resources at his disposal.

As I said earlier, prevention will depend on the fight against poverty. In autumn next year, we plan to gather together to undertake the first assessment of the state of progress on the Millennium Development Goals. We must already admit that our efforts have been inadequate. Of course, every country has its budgetary constraints. But we also have a duty to keep the promises we made at the dawn of the millennium. President Lula da Silva made this point earlier, forcefully and with commitment. He recalled our responsibility to history — which we endorse — to eliminate poverty while we have the means to do so.

In that context, I welcome the fact that trade liberalization within the framework of the Doha Round regained some momentum this summer in Geneva. Difficult negotiations still lie ahead of us — negotiations that must seek to meet expectations that are sometimes contradictory. Switzerland intends to play a constructive role, and I call on all our partners to

commit themselves to ensure the early success of the development round.

Prevention will require us to both detect and defuse today the problems of tomorrow. I believe that our efforts to promote peace must be rapidly fleshed out in two areas. The first of these is conflict that is borne of religion. Killing is unacceptable, and it is especially so if it is carried out for religious reasons. Yet increasingly frequently, religion is becoming the only frame of reference for analysing political and social problems. Such an extreme simplification of reality runs the risk of heightening tension. The international community must find a solution, and the United Nations is the ideal forum in which to do so.

The second area is environmental preservation. The increasing scarcity of resources is sowing the seeds of conflict over appropriation and distribution. Sustainable development must not be allowed to become an empty concept. Our actions to date within the context of the United Nations have not been sufficient to enable us to fulfil our responsibilities towards future generations. Devoting more time to seeking agreement on the Kyoto Protocol than the founding fathers took to draft the Charter of the United Nations is beneath our dignity.

The United Nations will be judged by its success in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. The institutional reforms now under way are a step in the right direction. It is up to us, the Member States, resolutely to commit ourselves to promote peace and to make the United Nations the instrument for carrying out that essential task.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mkapa: I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I assure you of Tanzania's support as you discharge your mandate. I pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his able stewardship of the work of the General Assembly. I commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his staff for their dedicated service and tireless efforts during a very difficult time.

The Millennium Development Goals represent our vision and hope for a new global partnership for shared global prosperity and security — an ideal at the very heart of the United Nations. But we are still far off the mark in meeting many of them, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. We must further strengthen our common resolve to act in their resolute pursuit. In this, as in other things, actions speak louder than words.

We commend Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden for consistently meeting the long-established United Nations target of allocating at least 0.7 per cent of the national incomes of rich countries to development cooperation. Those countries have a broad national consensus on that matter, and their people are not in any way poorer because of it. We urge the other rich countries to produce timetables to meet that long-overdue target, to have coherent development policies and to earnestly and deliberately build and nurture a national consciousness and consensus on the global war on poverty. That war should now be a central political issue for all countries, rich and poor. Only then will the political will be generated to do more for the timely attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

It is true that money is not a panacea, but the eighth Millennium Development Goal — to develop a global partnership for development — may actually be the single most important key to unlocking new initiatives and latent capabilities to enable us to attain the Goals. And a genuine partnership implies shared rights and responsibilities as well as a shared

commitment to be evaluated. I commend the Governments of the Netherlands and Denmark for conducting, and making public, evaluations of their performance in meeting their commitments under the eighth Millennium Development Goal.

On our part, never before have so many African Governments committed themselves to good democratic governance, to peer review, to ownership of the development agenda and to the participatory prioritization and sequencing of the tasks necessary for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We now need an equally unprecedented commitment — in deeds — to the global war on poverty in all rich countries. African countries doing their part in the global compact on poverty alleviation should not be constrained by a lack of supportive external resources. At the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, developed countries pledged to match stronger reform efforts in developing countries with increased support. Tanzania asks that they now show leadership by delivering on their promises.

When both rich and poor countries meet their obligations, tangible progress is realized. My country is an example. Our Primary Education Development Programme, for instance, has recorded remarkable progress. We now expect to attain the education Millennium Development Goal in 2006, nine years ahead of schedule. Gender parity has been attained, and the net enrolment ratio is already 90.1 per cent. Pass rates have doubled over the past four years. That was made possible by an increased budgetary allocation to the sector, by debt relief, by increased aid channelled through our own budget and by local ownership and participation. We are grateful for the cooperation we have received from our development partners. Together, we have shown what can be done where there is political will.

Yesterday, my colleagues and I launched the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, entitled "A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all". The report is a contribution by commissioners with varied backgrounds and experiences; it is also a reflection of the views of many ordinary people consulted through national and regional dialogues. It presents one important consensus: globalization has produced both striking achievements and harmful distortions in global growth and development. We all agreed that, left unchecked, globalization will exacerbate the wealth gap within and between nations, thereby planting the seeds of social instability and crime on a national and global scale. But the report also presents the prospect of hope. Globalization, when properly governed, can be a force for good — a catalyst for change and for meeting the Millennium Development Goals. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Responses to the challenges of globalization must begin at home. Good governance, prudent monetary and fiscal policies, macroeconomic stability, peace and security, the protection of property rights, setting priorities for poverty reduction and the creation of a conducive environment for investment and trade, both between Africans themselves and between Africa and the rest of the world — all those are things that we in Africa have agreed to address.

But I must stress one conditionality: no solutions to Africa's problems can be sustainable unless they are genuinely embraced and owned by Africans themselves. We have shown our new resolve to come to terms with our problems and to take the initiative and the lead in finding solutions. From our development partners, we ask in return for genuine respect for our ownership and the policy space for local initiative and leadership. We need policy space to deal with problems such as conflict, ethnicity, land and agrarian reform and institution-building, and we need adequate, consistent and predictable external support to implement the solutions we put forward.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo deserves our continued and strong support. Instability in that country robs the entire region of its potential for shared progress, development and solidarity. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must continue to walk down the path of peace, reconciliation and unity. They and the Government of President Kabila need and deserve our robust help. We commend President Mbeki and the South African Government for their efforts, and Tanzania pledges its unwavering support to them.

In Burundi, we commend President Museveni of Uganda and the South African Vice-President, Mr. Jacob Zuma, for their dedication to helping Burundi realize a new political and social dispensation of inclusive governance, development and peace. The Regional Initiative for Peace in Burundi has made strenuous efforts to accommodate, through negotiations, all the parties in a Government of

national unity. Sadly, the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL) has refused to be part of that process. Its declaration of responsibility for the massacres against innocent and unarmed refugees at Gatumba was the proverbial last straw for us in the region, so we took a stand and declared the FNL a terrorist group. We appeal for the Assembly's support in treating it as such.

The first international conference on the Great Lakes region, which Tanzania will host in November 2004, will review aspects concerning peace and security, governance and democracy, economic development and regional integration, as well as humanitarian and social issues in the region. Ultimately, we hope to adopt a comprehensive security, stability and development pact for the Great Lakes region. I thank the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region for supporting the preparatory process and appeal to the United Nations and the international community to render their support to that process.

The humanitarian tragedy in Darfur is harrowing and demands urgent remedy. A humanitarian ceasefire agreement must be promulgated, presaging the evolution of a democratic and political culture. We commend and support the effort by His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria and African Union Chair, and President Idriss Deby of Chad. We ask for the practical, urgent and increased support of the United Nations and the international community as a whole for the initiatives of the African Union in addressing this tragedy.

The question of Western Sahara has dragged on for too long. We fully support the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. It is the duty of this body to help them realize it. We support the United Nations peace plan and call on all sides to cooperate fully in its speedy implementation.

When the Middle East road map was put forward in 2003, we supported it, believing that it addressed comprehensively the issue of the establishment of a viable Palestinian State living with the State of Israel, with recognized and secure borders between them. It is regrettable that the road map has been put aside. In our view, the road map remains the most reasonable, viable and sustainable way of resolving this long-standing conflict. We condemn the cycle of violence and killings and the use of excessive force. We urge that the implementation of the road map be brought back on track.

We are living with the spectre of international terrorism: the most vicious and pernicious among international crimes. The people of Tanzania will never forget the terrorist attack directed at the American Embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998, which killed or wounded innocent Tanzanians. There should never be any doubt about our unflinching resolve to cooperate with others in combating terrorism in all its forms.

Tanzania is a faithful and active Member of the United Nations, and we reaffirm our readiness to work with our fellow Members in addressing global concerns in furtherance of the ideals of the Assembly and the Charter of the United Nations. It is, therefore, with deep humility and gratitude that the United Republic of Tanzania has secured the endorsement of the African Union to seek a non-permanent seat in the Security Council. Our candidature will be placed before the Assembly for election later during this session, and we appeal for the full support of our candidature.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to ravage many of our countries. As public awareness grows and technology improves, so do our chances of protecting the most basic human right, the right to life. That right can be enjoyed by our people if current and future advances in science and technology are extended to the many poor who are infected with HIV/AIDS. Preventive care, access to affordable drugs and the health delivery infrastructure in developing countries all need to be widened and strengthened. On this front, too, we need help.

Democratic governance is a universal norm, which has to be reflected also in the United Nations system. What is desirable for our individual countries must also be true for the United Nations. Recent developments in the reform agenda of the Organization must therefore be expedited. Our hope is that the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will bring forth recommendations for a firm jump forward in the reconfiguration of the reform process.

The Security Council must be representative of today's wider membership of the United Nations and reflective of the current geopolitical and economic structure of the world. There are countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America that deserve permanent seats because of their major contribution to the sustainability

of the Organization and to global peace, security and development. The time to bring them in has come.

Members of the United Nations must uphold steadfastly, in word and deed, the ideals of its Charter for peace with justice and for security with development for all. These common aspirations are the foundation of international law, of international order and of international cooperation. They also invest with credible legitimacy our collective pursuit of the happiness of humanity and the renewal of humanity's environment. Working together, we can ascend to the heights to which we aspire. Only then shall we leave to coming generations a deserved legacy of a common future for all mankind.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Republic Of Tanzania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by The Honourable Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The Honourable Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency The Honourable Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Kumaratunga: I congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the high office of President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly and assure you of Sri Lanka's fullest support and cooperation as you undertake the onerous responsibility of presiding over the deliberations of the Assembly. I also thank the outgoing President, The Honourable Julian Hunte, for his able and efficient conduct of the fifty-eighth session.

The International Day of Peace we celebrate today is indeed a significant event in the United Nations calendar. It is a day dedicated to the creation and pursuit of a culture of peace. As I speak today in this Hall of peace, men, women and children in my country are celebrating the Day of Peace through a wide variety of civil society events. Prayers and meditations, the resonating chimes of bells and the gentle glow of candlelight are powerful symbols of our deep collective yearning for peace.

We recognize that the pursuit of peace requires more than symbols. It requires consistent commitment, patience, perseverance and, above all, resolute action and consensus-building.

Peace and the resolution of conflict through dialogue take centre stage in the world today and hence need to be accorded the highest priority on the United Nations agenda. All of us here are only too aware that peace is not the simple absence of war; it entails an active engagement to understand and address the root causes that endanger peace and generate conflict.

In Sri Lanka, my Government has for 10 years implemented a series of programmes to engage the armed group that has been engaged in armed conflict in comprehensive peace negotiations. We face the challenges posed by an armed group using terror and suicide bombs in pursuit of its demand for a separate State. My Government has adopted the policy that all conflicts have deep-rooted and real causes, and that we must sift those causes from the acts of violence and terror and find the means to redress them. We believe that a lasting solution to conflict lies along the path of power-sharing between the centre and the regions where people of different communities live. We believe that this path can be found only through negotiations and dialogue.

We abhor violence and war. We believe in life and in the celebration of all that is human and decent. We believe that the moral justification of the State and of all human institutions, such as the United Nations, is the protection and the safeguard of life. In numerous elections, my Government has requested and received mandates from our people to end the conflict through a negotiated settlement. We are committed to achieving peace, a peace founded on democracy, respect for human rights, a pluralist polity and good governance.

We are fully aware that peace is not achieved easily. It is a constant struggle for mutual

understanding and reconciliation and the establishment of the rule of law, justice and equality.

The Buddha, popularly known as the Prince of Peace, preached at length about peace and all that is required to achieve it, both within each individual and among nations. I quote from the Dhammapada: "Victory breeds hatred. The defeated live in pain. Happily the peaceful live, giving up victory and defeat".

We are deeply saddened at the violence, instability, loss of life and human suffering in Iraq. We in Sri Lanka know, and have experienced first-hand, the impact of violence on society and the difficulty in finding solutions to problems of governance that satisfy all parties. As the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq recently pointed out, security measures alone will not suffice to end violence and create stability and peace. Political consensus-building, reconciliation, rehabilitation and the promotion of the rule of law are essential for democracy to take root. Equally important in today's interdependent, increasingly globalized world is the commitment of the international community to remain engaged and to ensure that Iraq does not become further plagued by violence and fragmented along ethnic or religious lines.

None of us, as leaders and, above all, as mothers and fathers, can ever forget the sheer brutality of the terrorist attack earlier this month on a school in Beslan, in the Russian Federation, which led to the loss of so many lives of children and adults. Terrorism in all its manifestations must be condemned and fought relentlessly and globally. While no cause justifies unleashing terror upon the innocent, such outrages must make us redouble our efforts to address their root causes and seek political and socio-economic explanations and solutions to them.

My Government is firmly committed to the global endeavour to fight terrorism. We have signed and ratified the United Nations conventions aimed at combating that menace, and we continue to contribute to the process by chairing the Ad Hoc Committee on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism. We hope that at this session of the General Assembly, substantial progress can be made on the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism and the draft convention on nuclear terrorism.

Sri Lanka believes in the United Nations and its potential to be the principal forum where the voice of the poor, the defenceless and the weak is also heard, as much as the voice of the rich and powerful. In that regard, we applaud the words today of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who made a passionate appeal for upholding the rule of law, without discrimination, throughout the world. We congratulate him on the courageous leadership he gives to our world body. It gives us confidence and hope at this moment of human history when we question our collective ability to lead humanity towards peace and prosperity.

We also recognize the need for reform to render the United Nations more responsive to the needs and aspirations of all its Member States. We look forward to the recommendations to be presented at this session of the General Assembly by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by the Secretary-General.

There is general agreement that the Security Council, as now constituted, does not reflect current geo-political realities. We share the concern over the lack of progress on the question of equitable regional representation and on an increase in the membership of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. For many years, the developing countries have consistently urged that the composition of the Security Council be broadened to accommodate the basic principles of democratic representation, including representation of the developing countries. In that context, we observe that Asia, the most populous continent and home to expanding economic powerhouses of the world, is grossly underrepresented in the present Council.

We take note that four countries — Brazil, Germany, India and Japan — will announce their participation in a compact under which they will collectively support their respective candidatures for permanent status in an expanded Security Council. Sri Lanka supports their candidatures, as they comply with the objective criteria applicable to the expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council. Sri Lanka would also wish to see a consensus emerge on the permanent representation of Africa in the Security Council. Africa must be included in a final determination on the future composition of the Security Council. It is also hoped that the Open-Ended Working Group will continue to exert efforts to resolve all outstanding issues expeditiously.

We propose that the General Assembly, representing all Member States of the United Nations, should play a larger and more active role as a deliberative and decision-making body.

At the dawn of the new millennium, four years ago, we forged a consensus to pursue a vision of an inclusive globalization process that provides benefits to the widest possible segments of society. Setting aside the commonplace clichés about globalization, we agreed on a number of goals to be implemented within specific time frames.

My Government's economic and social development programmes were planned and put into action 10 years ago. We have now made the necessary changes to align our plans more closely with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The Sri Lankan Government's strategy for development seeks a constructive partnership between a strong and accountable private sector, including foreign investors, and a robust and responsive public sector. The major thrust of our vision is to eliminate poverty, reduce inequalities and enhance the standard of living among the various sectors of our population, thus providing equal opportunities for all.

On the subject of social progress, I must commend the United Nations for its continued commitment and perseverance in promoting and protecting children's rights. Apart from guaranteeing the rights of every child to education and good health services, Sri Lanka believes that children must be protected from abuse of all types — sexual, alcohol, drugs and tobacco. We have adopted measures to combat those evils.

Children in some of our countries suffer from the ignominious practice of being used as child soldiers. In Sri Lanka, we are addressing the problem of child conscription by the armed group, by seeking to engage that group in the process of negotiations and by supporting the activities spear-headed by UNICEF and by civil society organizations.

Our economic strategy is market driven but geared to achieve human development and prosperity at the grass roots level. We have crafted a policy and launched programmes to channel development efforts and resources to domestic capacity-builders at the village level who are the pillars of our national economy. The majority of our population live in the rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Promotion of small- and medium-scale enterprises is therefore vital to sustain development. Sri Lanka draws strength from the recognition the United Nations has granted to small and medium industrialists in the developing world by declaring 2005 as the Year for Micro-Credit.

We witness with concern the emergence of a contrived association of certain religious beliefs with some groups of fanatics. Extremism, violence and terrorism are the complete antithesis of the ethical and spiritual foundation of all religious philosophies and practices. We should work resolutely to prevent those aberrations from becoming irreversible trends.

On the other hand, we are disturbed to witness religious symbols being defamed or abused for commercial purposes. Whether the symbols belong to the Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish or any other faith, such abuse should be condemned and prohibited. The recent phenomenon of Buddhist symbols being used for commercial purposes, thus causing pain of mind to Buddhists all over the world is a case in point. Fortunately, most of those organizations have agreed to refrain from such abuse in the future. Sri Lanka, together with other like-minded States, has brought the situation to the attention of UNESCO and other relevant intergovernmental bodies. We propose that the United Nations call upon those responsible to pay due respect to religious symbols and practices. That would be a fitting contribution by the United Nations to its own initiative on a dialogue among civilizations.

This year Sri Lanka will begin events to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our membership of the United Nations that falls next year in 2005. On that occasion, we will renew our commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We expect the Organization to provide leadership in the task of creating a world where understanding and harmony prevail, along with economic, scientific and technological advancement.

My commitment — and that of my Government and the people of Sri Lanka — to the United Nations remains undiminished. Our hope is that all Member States will cooperate fully with the United Nations to realize the Goals of the Millennium Declaration.

Finally, I would like to say that our noble words, unless translated quickly into palpable deeds, will remain no more than a silent testimonial to our

collective unwillingness or incapacity to transform the lives of our peoples when they cry out for attention and redress. If all that the United Nations can do for them is to churn out, periodically, ritual phrases and hollow invocations to duty and responsibility, their frustration will swell and spread globally, challenging peace and stability. That must not happen.

Let us leave this session of the General Assembly not only with renewed commitment to the ideals of the Organization, but with renewed vigour to address our awesome responsibilities for alleviating the plight of the poor, the hungry, the disadvantaged and the oppressed.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abel Pacheco de la Espriella, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mr. Abel Pacheco de la Espriella, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abel Pacheco de la Espriella, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pacheco de la Espriella (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government and the people of Costa Rica, may I convey to you, Mr. President, our warmest congratulations and best wishes on your assumption of the important post of President.

The nineteenth century was, for vast sectors of mankind, the century of freedom. However, in many regions of the world, there were and continue to be, unacceptable levels of repression. The twentieth century was, for a good number of nations, the century of economic development. Nonetheless, the end of the twentieth century witnessed a prevalence of poverty, oppressive hunger and injustice, that have conspired together against aspirations for peace, security and justice.

The twenty-first century should be devoted to making freedom universal and consolidating economic development, but above all, to creating an opportunity for social justice, international cooperation, equitable relations among nations and the eradication of poverty.

Since the beginning of my administration and in keeping with that idea, I have advocated a globalization that is tempered by justice and focused on fulfilling the basic needs of all human beings and their right to happiness.

At my inauguration in May 2002, I noted that just a few years earlier, when I began to speak of the need to globalize justice and to humanize globalization, some skeptics considered me a lonely voice crying out in a desert of fierce competition. Today we are many more and our voice is much more powerful in demanding that the process of globalization be made more humane.

I am therefore very encouraged today by the fact that world opinion shares the same concerns which are reflected in the recommendations of the ILO report entitled "A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all". That report correctly states: "We believe the dominant perspective on globalization must shift more from a narrow preoccupation with markets to a broader preoccupation with people." (Preface, p. vii)

As greater integration develops between peoples and economies, it is urgent that we incorporate elements of a humanistic ethic into the globalization process, as an opportunity to spread the benefits of economic development and scientific and technological progress. These significant developments, the product of human wisdom and intelligence, are and must be enjoyed by all as part of the patrimony of all mankind.

Today, this Organization unites 191 States with different identities and diverse histories, but with futures and presents that grow more interdependent with every passing day. In international forums, it has become commonplace to speak of the need to formulate inclusive national models of development. I believe that it is high time to speak of an inclusive global society. This General Assembly, which represents and expresses the common will of all

mankind, must play a central role in promoting a markedly humane globalization.

Economic development is a force that must be directed and guided. The economy's positive and powerful forces should not be left to the invisible hand determined, in most cases, by the obvious inequality among nations. In that regard, it is necessary to consider some concerning data regarding the global economy. The rate of growth of the global gross domestic product decreased progressively from an average of 3.6 per cent in the 1960s to an average of a 1.1 per cent in the 1990s. If we compare the per capita gross domestic products in constant dollars of the 20 poorest countries and the 20 richest, we note that, between 1960 and 1962, the former were almost 54 times poorer than the latter, while four decades later, in the period 2000-2002, they were 121 times poorer. The differences have been accentuated and the gap has broadened. These results show an inverse relationship to what we should be looking for if we really seek a peaceful, stable and fair world.

In light of those realities, and in order to enable the 1.2 billion poorest people in the world to participate in the benefits of economic development, we must promote policies and strategies that create opportunities for all. To that end, it is necessary to make progress at the international level in the following two directions. First, we must agree on and strengthen rules and policies that provide a fair normative framework for globalization. Secondly, we should create or broaden the venues for the effective international negotiation, management and implementation of those agreements.

Poverty, the lack of opportunities, deficient medical services and limited access to education, frequently accompanied by excessive expenditure in armaments, cause the suffering of most peoples. It is noteworthy that, in 2003, the world set a new record by devoting $956 billion to military expenditure. That represents a 17-fold increase in the amount of resources devoted worldwide to official development assistance and more than the sum of the foreign debt of the 64 countries with the lowest gross domestic product. Those numbers demonstrate that mankind has yet to understand that security results not from multiplying weapons, but from multiplying loaves of bread. Peace and security are built, above all, by combating injustice, satisfying basic needs, striving for common social goals and establishing fair and honest Government.

As pointedly noted by Mr. Oscar Arias Sánchez, former President of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize laureate,

> "the billions of dollars spent every year on weapons and on military contingents deprive the world's poorest peoples of the chance to fulfil their basic needs".

In that regard, Costa Rica fully supports the draft framework convention on international arms transfers. That project, based on the obligations already undertaken by States, seeks to regulate the export of weapons and their marking and tracing in order to prevent arms transfers to terrorist and rebel groups and to those States that breach international humanitarian law or basic human rights principles. I respectfully urge all United Nations Member States to adopt that instrument of international law. I am convinced that it will contribute substantially to our struggle against the illicit traffic of weapons around the world.

The aphorism that "the security of one is inseparable from the security of all" is growing truer every day. Global democratic governance requires strengthening both the United Nations and the competences of the General Assembly. Every State Member must have a voice and every people of the world must be represented, in conformity with the principles of equality and universality that govern the United Nations system. The Security Council must be reformed by enlarging its membership and making it more democratic.

The maintenance of prerogatives for some States, to the detriment of the great majority of States Members, is not only antidemocratic, but contrary to the principle of sovereign equality among States enshrined in the San Francisco Charter itself. Committed to the principles of universality and democracy on which the United Nations is based, I renew Costa Rica's longstanding call for the admission to the United Nations, in conditions of full legal equality, of the Republic of China on Taiwan, whose Government has often reiterated its willingness to assume the obligations imposed by the Charter.

Allow me to refer to one of the worst scourges affecting peaceful relations among the nations: the threat of terrorism. The grave attacks committed all

over the world over the past few years — in particular, those committed in New York, Madrid and Beslan — prove how far terrorists are prepared to go. Costa Rica is fervently committed to the culture of life and, in consequence, our people and Government condemn all acts of terrorism.

Even the loftiest ideals from the most legitimate sources become mere excuses and pretexts when they are taken over by terrorists. The first victims of the terrorists are the causes that they claim to defend. International society must firmly and resolutely confront all acts of terrorism, the painful and deadly consequences of which touch so many nations and innocent victims. It is essential to combat all forms of terrorism as well as its sources of financing and safe havens. It is equally essential to combat with the same resolve the poverty, inequality and hunger — both for food and for justice — that afflict many peoples.

The coordination of the international struggle against terrorism must be assigned to an independent, professional and permanent organ located at the centre of this Organization. For that reason, we propose the creation of the post of United Nations high commissioner on terrorism that would assist the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in the comprehensive fight against that threat and its causes. Only by creating such an organ, which would draw together resources and multiply efforts, will it be possible to respond adequately and jointly to the challenge posed by international terrorism.

Today, global democratic governance has two fundamental pillars: the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. The International Court of Justice, whose obligatory jurisdiction Costa Rica accepts without reservation, provides us with an impartial instance for the peaceful solution of controversies within the framework of the rule of law, thus avoiding haphazard or arbitrary interpretations of the legal norms.

Nevertheless, we note with concern that very few States accept the obligatory jurisdiction of the Court without conditions. Most States have made reservations that exclude, in some cases, all the possible or even all the conceivable situations in which they would have to submit to the authority of the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

The International Criminal Court, whose establishment Costa Rica supported enthusiastically, provides us with an impartial organ to judge the most serious crimes against mankind. Ironically, while we all repudiate those crimes, only 94 States have ratified the Rome Statute and accepted the competence of the Court.

I would also like to refer to the need to globalize criminal justice in order to prosecute those who, taking advantage of public office, rob their own peoples. How many generations will be condemned to pay the odious debts created by leaders irremediably sick of greed? We must never forget that corruption is the mother of poverty because it deprives the poorest peoples of the world of the resources necessary to finance their education, health, housing and social security.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is time to give justice its rightful place. There should be no loopholes. Asylum and protection should not be given to those who ransack their own peoples. All safe havens of impunity must disappear.

As we have a duty to protect the oppressed and persecuted, we also have a duty to protect those who do not yet have a voice. In particular, there is a pressing need to agree on a normative framework, internationally binding, to uphold human dignity from the moment of conception. It necessarily follows, therefore, that to defend life is to defend the very essence of man itself, all the promises, joys and hopes of the human being.

I believe in science within ethical limits. As a medical doctor, I reject human cloning, while I firmly support research on adult stem cells, which does not present the same ethical and legal problems as does cloning. I invite you all to join us in our efforts to adopt an international convention to ban all forms of human cloning.

We owe a great debt to nature. It is time to ensure that globalization be sustainable from an ecological point of view, in order to maintain the viability of human life on planet Earth. Notwithstanding the commitment of 120 nations, we have been unable to obtain the necessary support for the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.

In 2001, the High-Level Panel on Financing for Development proposed that the various international

entities on environment be consolidated into a single organization with a standing similar to that of the World Trade Organization or the International Monetary Fund. Regrettably, this proposal, as well as similar initiatives, has not yet enjoyed the necessary consensus for its approval. Undoubtedly, something must be done soon in this regard.

We live in a globalized world. This is the logical outcome of the natural evolution of things and the progress of mankind, especially in the areas of telecommunication and information technology. This fact has brought nations closely together and, at the same time, it has created unavoidable multilateral responsibilities.

Today, we live in a world that tries to follow not only the rules of the global market but also democratic principles, one that tries to uphold higher standards regarding the observance of human rights, while rejecting all forms of odious discrimination and showing concern for the environment. The observance of these minimum standards, adopted by the international society itself, should be the rule for measuring each State.

Costa Rica would like to see the following principles recognized and practised by the whole international community: greater respect for human rights and labour guarantees, greater protection for the environment and greater social investment in exchange for less military expenditure. States should have greater opportunities to access international cooperation, credit and markets, while prices should be fair, reflecting real costs. It is not fair that poor countries, such as Costa Rica, which are making efforts in the areas of disarmament, respect for human rights, labour justice, protection of the environment, and greater social investment, be penalized by excluding them from the lists of beneficiaries of cooperation programmes and from systems of preferential treatment for the access of their products to the markets of developed countries.

If we desire lasting peace and a secure world, we should give a humane dimension to relations among the various nations. Let us undertake together the challenge to overcome poverty, hunger, malnutrition and injustice, as we committed ourselves to do just yesterday, in the meeting convened by the President of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Let us make this task the centre of the international agenda for the short term. A better world is possible. It is in our hands to build it.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Costa Rica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abel Pacheco de la Espriella, President of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9

General debate

Address by Mr. Bernard Rudolf Bot, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We will now begin the general debate. I call on His Excellency Mr. Bernard Rudolf Bot, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Mr. Bot (Netherlands): It is an honour for me to address the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on behalf of the European Union (EU).

With its 25 member States, the European Union represents 13 per cent of the United Nations membership and accounts for almost 30 percent of the world's economy. Our contributions to the United Nations go further; EU member States pay more than 36 per cent of the United Nations regular budget and about half of all voluntary contributions to the United Nations Funds and Programmes. They contribute more than 50,000 troops to United Nations-led and United Nations-authorized international peace missions.

We in the EU are proud of our contribution to the United Nations and to international cooperation. But we are not complacent. We understand that our security and prosperity are inextricably linked to the fate of others, and we know that we cannot isolate ourselves from cross-border threats and challenges. We realize that climate change does not respect nationality, ethnicity or religion, that HIV/AIDS knows no borders and that terrorists kill indiscriminately. No nation can respond to these threats in isolation; the only way forward is through collective action.

In a world of global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity depend more

and more on an effective multilateral system. The search for a strong, rule-based international society is more imperative than ever.

We welcome the Secretary-General's call to work harder to strengthen the rule of law for all. His agenda is our agenda. That is why reform of the United Nations, with a view to making it stronger, more effective and more efficient, is a high priority for the European Union. The Union remains committed to multilateralism and a rule-based international order, with the United Nations at its core. What gives great strength to the United Nations is its legitimacy. It has no substitute in the international community. It is unique. But the Organization must adapt to changing circumstances. The reform efforts that have already been set in motion by the Secretary-General must be intensified and deepened with a view to making the United Nations stronger, more effective and more efficient.

The EU looks forward to the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and to the Secretary-General's recommendations that will be submitted to the General Assembly. Next year, the General Assembly will meet at the highest level to review progress in honouring all of the commitments of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The review must be comprehensive, balanced and effective. The summit must deal with the major, interlinked, concerns of peace, security, poverty and sustainable development. The recommendations in the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization are an important contribution to the review.

We have committed ourselves to combating poverty and promoting sustainable development. The Millennium Development Goals must be achieved. Urgent action is called for. Both developing and developed countries must put in place a range of measures, as agreed at the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development including: good governance; expansion of trade opportunities, in particular for developing countries; and an increase in official development assistance. The European Union is committed to those objectives. It is very much on track for increasing its official development assistance (ODA) to 0.39 per cent of gross national product (GNP) in 2006 as part of a longer-term effort to raise its ODA contributions to 0.7 per cent of GNP.

Combating HIV/AIDS must be an integral part of our global campaign against poverty. As one of the most devastating pandemics in human history, HIV/AIDS is literally a disease of mass destruction: a disease which strikes 10 people every minute. In Africa especially, AIDS is tearing the fabric of society apart. Fighting that disaster is a priority for us all.

Prevention of HIV/AIDS is inextricably linked to sexual and reproductive health and rights. We wish to reaffirm our commitment to the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development and will do so again at the tenth anniversary commemoration on 14 October. Reproductive health and rights are an essential part of development.

One of the greatest threats to international peace and security today is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The international community must address that challenge effectively. The EU adopted a comprehensive and coherent strategy against the proliferation of those weapons last December, covering a wide spectrum of measures. The EU is guided by the conviction that a multilateral approach to security is the best way to maintain international order. That is why we are firmly committed to uphold, implement and strengthen multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements. The multilateral treaty system provides the legal and normative basis for all non-proliferation efforts.

International treaty regimes and export control arrangements are in place to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Those instruments, however, have not succeeded in putting a complete stop to proliferation. Additional measures are necessary, in particular to combat the risk of terrorist organizations gaining access to those weapons and delivery systems. In that regard, the EU welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), which is fully in line with the EU strategy.

With others, the European Union will also explore the possibility of establishing a close relationship between the United Nations and the Hague International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

Terrorism is another threat that can be dealt with only by effective multilateralism and close

international cooperation. Terrorists' capacity to strike is still very substantial, as shown by the heinous attacks in several countries over the past year. I wish to reiterate that the European Union utterly condemns all terrorist acts, irrespective of their alleged motivations, and to express our profound solidarity with the victims of such acts.

The European Union welcomes the development of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, which will strengthen the ability of the United Nations to oversee implementation of anti-terrorism resolutions and conventions. Obviously, the United Nations can do its work well only if Member States honour their commitments and assume their responsibilities. Equipping the United Nations to deal with terrorism also demands readiness to act in situations in which States cannot or do not wish to implement their international obligations in the fight against terrorism.

This brings me to the issue of human rights — another common concern. Human rights lie at the core of the work of the United Nations. The European Union fully agrees with Secretary-General Annan's statement that terrorism must not be used as an excuse to trample on human rights. States must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism comply with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. We must protect the universal values and fundamental freedoms whose enjoyment is seriously impaired by acts of terrorism.

The European Union is a committed supporter of initiatives to improve the implementation of human rights obligations worldwide and at country level. The European Union recognizes the responsibility of the international community to protect mankind from genocide, war crimes and grave and massive violations of human rights. The European Union welcomes the introduction of a human rights-based approach in the work of all United Nations agencies and programmes. That will ensure that United Nations assistance activities contribute to achieving such rights for everyone everywhere. Our own initiatives in that area often complement and strengthen those initiated within the United Nations framework. We especially welcome the close cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations special mechanism in respect of children in armed conflict and human rights defenders.

The valuable work being done by the United Nations, particularly by the Special Rapporteur on torture, in pursuit of the prevention and eradication of all forms of torture, is strongly recommended and supported by the EU. The European Union would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its opposition to the death penalty.

The European Union stresses the importance of the International Criminal Court in putting an end to impunity and strengthening the rule of law throughout the world. It will pursue its efforts to ensure the widest possible ratification of, and accession to, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The world needs a United Nations that can intervene decisively to prevent, limit and put an end to military conflicts. An estimated 40 per cent of countries emerging from civil wars relapse into conflict within five years. The lesson — familiar but often forgotten — is that the United Nations system must be better attuned to how such conflicts can be prevented and peace preserved. No matter how difficult, preventing conflict and preserving a precarious peace is less costly than intervening in a full-blown conflict.

The European Union is aware of its responsibility in that area and is increasing its capabilities to maintain its already significant contribution to conflict prevention, international crisis management and peacekeeping operations. It will also continue to assist other regional organizations to enhance their own crisis management capabilities. The United Nations must intensify its cooperation with those organizations, in part with a view to enhancing their capacity for crisis management, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. To that end, the European Union is working with the United Nations Secretariat to implement the Joint Declaration on United Nations-EU Cooperation in Crisis Management of September 2003.

Several regional issues warrant special attention. The Middle East peace process must be put back on track. That means that the entire international community must back the road map — the only road to an agreed negotiated two-State solution. The European Union and its Quartet partners will remain engaged in the search for a settlement. The European Union thinks that the Assembly can make an important contribution to that objective by focusing on substantive issues in the peace process and adopting a pragmatic and constructive approach towards this problem.

The Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 1546 (2004) marks the restoration of sovereignty to Iraq. The European Union wholeheartedly supports the political process and the new Iraqi Interim Government and calls on all Member States to do the same. It gives its full backing to the holding of democratic elections in January 2005. It is committed to unwavering support of the pivotal United Nations role in that country. The Iraqi people have suffered so much and deserve the chance to have a better life. Let us offer them that chance.

In a similar vein, the process of securing stability, reconstruction and democratization in Afghanistan must remain an international priority. The Afghans are desperate for peace. They demand a say in their country's future. Over 10 million Afghans, more than 40 per cent of them women, have registered to vote in the presidential elections on 9 October. There can be no better sign of their enthusiasm for democracy. The European Union will continue its political and financial assistance to Afghanistan and its people.

Developments in Africa are cause for both optimism and concern. Increasingly, Africans are taking responsibility for solving the problems of their continent. The progress of the African Union in establishing its architecture for peace and security is a case in point. The European Union will use its African Peace Facility to help the African Union build capacity to engage in peace support and peacekeeping operations.

The European Union will closely cooperate with the African Union, the United Nations, the Arab League and the United States with a view to harmonizing international efforts to contain and resolve the conflict in Darfur. It will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations, in particular by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The European Union expresses its concern over the recent increase in tensions in the Great Lakes region and calls on all countries in the region to adhere to the Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation. It remains our conviction that the resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region requires a regional approach. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the European Union supports a more focused and robust mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and related increased capabilities. It is actively examining different options for continued support to United Nations efforts to strengthen MONUC.

Also, the European Union remains deeply concerned about the situation in Zimbabwe and urges that the Government of Zimbabwe establish the conditions for and hold free and fair elections in line with the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) August 2004 electoral guidelines.

Many courageous men and women are trying to make a difference under the blue flag of the United Nations. Last year's bombing in Baghdad was a tragic demonstration of the fact that the work of the United Nations is often dangerous. The European Union supports the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the safety and security of United Nations staff. We are keen to discuss his proposals. Through our policies, actions, and resources, we, the Member States, bear the responsibility of making it possible for the United Nations to go where it should.

The European Union itself is an example of multilateralism at work. Conflicting interests and diverging views still exist within the European Union, as they do everywhere. But conflicts are resolved within the framework of common institutions and binding rules. Multilateralism works. A rule-based international order is possible. And necessary. The European Union will strive to achieve that goal everywhere.

Address by Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Drnovšek (*spoke in Slovene: English text provided by the delegation*): Through the founding of the United Nations almost 60 years ago, humankind raised its mutual cooperation to an entirely new level.

Prior to that, humankind painfully came to realize, through a catastrophe of unimaginable dimensions, the inseparable link between its fate and the urgent need for international cooperation.

Today the fate of humankind is even more crucially linked than ever before. The boundaries between the problems of "others" and "our" problems are being increasingly erased. This applies to a wide range of areas: from security and social welfare to the economy and the environment. For this reason, world problems demand solidarity and the additional commitment of the international community to help those in need and to ensure that everyone will share in the fruits of technological progress. In this spirit, Slovenia supports the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and its emphasis on the urgent need to ensure the conditions for a just and fair globalization.

The Millennium Goals represent a major commitment to resolving problems of the modern world. But the developmental goals for bridging the gap between rich and poor are not being realized to a satisfactory extent. Existing international mechanisms and institutions are not ensuring that the trends of increasing global imbalance can be turned around for the better. We need change that will break through the inertia of established systems of operation. And for this we need new approaches: introducing innovative sources of financing world development can be one such approach. It is time for us to realize the urgent need for change in world relations, and to summon the necessary will to put these changes into effect and thereby raise international cooperation to a new level.

The past year was again marked by international terrorism, which claimed countless innocent lives. We witnessed with pain the tragedies in Beslan, Moscow, Madrid, Istanbul, Riyadh, Haifa and elsewhere. International terrorism is erasing the boundary between peace and war. The common fight against international terrorism and its origins must remain one of the priority tasks of individual Members and of the entire United Nations. This also applies to preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The unanimous Security Council resolution is a welcome step towards effective cooperation in this area.

When we combat the universal evil of terrorism, we should not do this at the expense of the existing legal standards of human rights and international humanitarian law. Any lowering of these standards will be repaid to us in a reduction of the legitimacy of international action — and consequently in a creation of fertile ground for further attacks on human security.

We should also draw attention to the responsibility of countries, in accordance with the principles of good governance, to ensure for their citizens the necessary conditions for a secure and decent life.

In that context, we must express our concern at the humanitarian situation in Darfur, and we welcome the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to seek a way out of the crisis.

The increasingly direct contacts among cultures and civilizations bring new challenges and new opportunities. Let us exploit them for mutual enrichment and the formulation of a common consciousness of humankind. We will be able to do that only with the presumption of radical equality and the tolerant acceptance of plurality in human values. The boundaries of the plurality of those values are delineated by fundamental human rights and freedoms. The United Nations plays a central part in asserting them internationally.

Slovenia welcomes the start of work by the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, and assures her of our full willingness to cooperate. At the same time, we express our continued support of the International Criminal Court, which represents an important instrument for the exercise of the rule of law and human rights.

Only a multilateral response to modern challenges can be effective. Of all existing organizations, the United Nations is without doubt the most important and most appropriate for seeking such responses. However, it is in need of institutional reform, so that its structure — the structure of 60 years ago — can now better reflect the realities of today's world. Solutions to the burning issues facing humankind must be sought within the United Nations system, otherwise solutions will be imposed outside it. Frequently, that will undoubtedly be to the detriment of human development.

Slovenia supports the efforts to revitalize the General Assembly and acknowledges the achievements of Julian Hunte, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, in that area. We eagerly await

the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change at the end of the year, and we express our willingness to cooperate fully. We hope that, on the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, we will see such changes, which will ensure for this global Organization a central place and the greatest possible effectiveness in performing its mission.

Increasingly, threats to international peace and security are taking on new forms, which for a long time now have not been limited to the danger of aggression by one country against another. They cover a whole range of internal tensions and conflicts within countries, on the one hand, and transboundary threats such as international terrorism, environmental pollution and the asymmetrical effects of globalization, on the other. In modern threats to international peace and security, States are not the only players. For that reason alone, States cannot on their own provide a satisfactory response to them.

Intergovernmental cooperation needs to be supplemented through the inclusion of various non-governmental organizations and global civil society.

I would like also to highlight the responsibility and potential of transnational corporations to contribute to protecting the environment and to eliminating the tensions caused by global competitive models. Non-governmental organizations can contribute to solutions through innovative approaches and by going beyond the limitations of established bureaucratic frameworks. They can help to create a critical mass of awareness regarding the urgent need for change and the elimination of global imbalances. By incorporating the contribution of various segments of global society into the work of the United Nations, we will make it more sensitive to the actual problems of people in various parts of the world.

In that context, we welcome the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, since it sets out a range of useful proposals regarding the contribution of non-governmental actors.

The complexity of modern threats to world peace and security also require a strengthening of the cooperation between various regional organizations and the United Nations. In this respect, we welcome the open debate in the Security Council on this subject. Such cooperation is especially welcome in cases where regional intervention can be more rapid and effective in conflict prevention and in post-conflict peace-building.

Next year Slovenia will assume the presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and in that capacity as well we will strive for a further intensification of the good cooperation between the two organizations.

In that spirit, the European Union is assuming increasing responsibility for stabilization and progress in the countries of south-eastern Europe. In the past year we have witnessed major progress on the part of the countries in the region. However, in some areas we also saw a resurgence of the dangers created by still-unresolved inter-ethnic issues and a lack of socio-economic prospects.

The goal of attaining democratic standards, including in the areas of human rights and the protection of minorities, must remain at the centre of our efforts. At the same time, however, we have to note that certain unresolved status questions hamper the political and economic consolidation of the region. We will thus have to devote greater attention to resolving those questions.

Globalization is erasing geographical boundaries and reducing the physical distances between people. At the same time, however, it is increasing the differences between rich and poor — between those who are sharing in the positive effects of globalization and those who are being pushed even further to the margins. Frequently we forget that not even those who derive the greatest benefit from globalization can protect themselves from its negative effects. Not even the richest and most technically advanced of us can isolate ourselves from international terrorism or from the effects of climate change and extreme poverty.

For that reason, our common commitment and responsibility must be to ensure that all people benefit from the positive effects of globalization, and that, through our joint efforts, we ensure the protection of the environment. We can achieve this only through the broadest possible partnership and solidarity. There are more than enough signals that it is now high time for coordinated international action.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.